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## What has been “reengineered” thus far?

*In this paper, I explore both management and non-management literature using Handy (1993) and Hammer and Champy (1995), amongst others, and critique these approaches with symbolic interactionism and actor network theory. One of the principal emphases, providing the paper’s plan is the notion of Latour’s (1993, 2005) ‘actor network theory’ and its contribution to understanding the conflicting dilemmas posed when managers in four private sector organisations introduced new forms of working practices to change their organisational cultures. The second part of the paper discusses the complex processes involved in cultural changes using the data from my field work on 4 organisations in the United Kingdom that have recently been “reengineered”, as a limited number of organisations undergo fundamental changes to their management and organisational systems at any given moment in time. The importance of language and levels of discourse in understanding respondents’ interview statements and stories are explored so as to deepen insights into the dynamic richness of organisational cultural change and gain understanding of some of the conflicts and tensions when managers, who rely heavily on Hammer and Champy’s (1995) and their followers’ “reengineering” rhetoric introduce organisational changes in a top-down, autocratic and totalising manner.*

In managers’ attempts to enforce new work designs and communication practices such as team-working, team and departmental briefings, mobile working and so on, they inadvertently adopt ‘colonising’ tendencies which bring about unanticipated resistance and conflict from employees who wish to safeguard their self esteem and human dignity. The paper’s plan is

also indebted to Mead’s (1964) use of language and cognition to analyse employees’ contributions (in a cooperative or resistant manner) when asked to be part of teams, 24 hour working and so on.

Mead’s symbolic interactionism and Latour’s networks of relationships and sub-cultural groupings and employee

presence are vital conceptual, recognition and analytical frameworks to understanding what employees make of their organisational world, how they may decide to contribute (by increasing or reducing their presence) and those 'higher up' that ask them to alter their value sets and working practices to their organisations' and managers' values and external market forces.

## ■ Organisational Cultural Change within Managerial Perspectives

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### Hammer and Champy's (1995) Approach

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Among relatively recent proposals is Hammer and Champy's (1995) Business Process Reengineering (BPR), which they describe in their book "Reengineering the Corporation" as : *'Fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business processes to bring about dramatic improvements in performance'*. This definition promises interesting results, not less than a 'dramatic and radical' organisational cure. Unfortunately, the final word has not been said – neither by Hammer and Champy nor by their followers. The way forward seems to be keeping the best of the new practices such as introducing team-working and adding what is considered best in other busi-

ness and organisational proposals (e.g. encouraging presence). In order to enrich my understanding of the varieties of interactions between management and employees when new forms of working are introduced in the four organisations studied, I want to explore both managerial as well as non-managerial literature as descriptive frameworks to see what these may be able to contribute to the debate and the consequences on the lives of organisations and its members.

Increasingly, as managers introduce new ideas and ways of organising work there have arisen established, modern structures replete with control and authority-laden mechanisms that exploit people's labour. As a result of these control mechanisms such as clocking in and out, production and service target deadlines, appraisal and performance monitoring devices with the increasing dependence on information technology (IT) as a tracking device of employees' labour input, managers and organisations emerge (perhaps inadvertently) as colonising and totalising institutions.

The apparently appetising "therapy of freedom" (Lawton & Rose, 1991) which these new ideas of organising work seemed to promise may gradually give way to those higher up lording it over those lower down the organisational hierarchy such that the latter lose their presence and may have to

reassert their freedom and self respect, sometimes in less appropriate ways. I explore the dynamic nature of the interaction between managers and employees using the notion of presence-the extent to which employees are willing to contribute to the development of new working practices such that their personal lives and those of their organisations are enriched symbiotically. However, Hammer and Champy's utopian argument in terms of how managers and employees can work together has been articulated earlier by Peters and Waterman (1982) as

*a set of shared values and rules about discipline, details and execution can provide the framework in which practical autonomy takes place routinely... The institution provides the guiding belief and creates a sense of excitement, a sense of being a part of the best, a sense of producing something of quality that is generally valued (p. 323).*

I hereby question the validity of Peters and Waterman's 'shared' assumptions (just like those of Morgan, (1986), Schein, (1985) and Handy, (1993)). The findings from my fieldwork on four different organisations within the UK counties of Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire in the East Midlands region do not appear to support this naïve and taken-for-granted assumption of the organisational development school. Another such school is from Handy.

## Handy's (1993) Approach

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Handy (1993) portrays a predominantly descriptive framework of organisational culture. He emphasises the need for mechanisms to preserve an organisation's status quo in the way it organises and manages its work activities, e.g. relatively new appraisal schemes (e.g. 360 degree feedback), performance indicators and the formulation of production targets (aspects which could represent what distinguishes one organisation from another, thus its identity).

Such mechanisms determine the nature of organisational culture (and the values and aspirations it stands for and seeks to encourage its members to adopt), and of course, are determined by it. Most organisational cultures are characterised by the fact that power is handled by a select group of individuals or managers— who may or may not overstep their remit when new forms of work are introduced, resulting in an encroachment onto other employees' personal presence and ways in which they organise their lives and those of others.

Chances are, however, that overstepping in terms of how managers ask employees to adopt new roles and responsibilities will become endemic, and that staff disaffection and overt or covert resistance in employees' subversive acts and what has been referred to

as “culture jamming” (Dery, 1993) to existing organisational work procedures will develop. Such “jamming” may be observable at the level of employees’ choices of language and their definitions of what may account for new working practices and what may not. Such resistance may damage the ability of organisations to resist fundamental changes, and hence can be expected to increase the effort required to ‘balance’ individual resistance to organisational impositions and, by so doing maintain an identity. This ‘balancing’ act is done through introducing new forms of working, cooperating and networking between organisational members such that a desired state of ‘friendliness’ is obtained. In the context of the present paper, this suggests that managers may inadvertently ‘colonise’ employees’ contributions more than is necessary in terms of organisational change and even of organisational survival (Frost, 1991).

The main reason for this type of development is the tendency to emphasise the personal, in particular personal power such that the human dignity and personal enrichment and contributions of others is compromised. The latter is identified and identifiable via the notion of presence. Handy does not appear to find any internal criterion for organisations to prevent or moderate this tendency. The paper addresses this imbalance. In the next section, two frameworks (of a non-management

nature) are introduced to help create an effective and efficient plan, the use of which will assist in the data analysis.

## ■ Organisational Cultural Change within non-managerial Perspectives

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### Callon and Latour’s (1991, 1993) Actor-Network Theory Approach

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In their analysis of the interactions between human and non-human actors Callon (1991) and Latour (1993) observed the identity formations of the actors involved in negotiation and interaction processes. Within this political framework of shaping each other’s identity, the actors construct their own sets of meanings, agree upon the representations of these meanings and understandings, and constantly work together in the quest for individual and sometimes organisationally, collective (or divergent) survival. In actor-network theory, actors determine and are determined by the network(s) within which the interactions take place and the level of their presence in these.

I am using this theoretical richness of actor network theory to depict the dynamic complexities involved in the sets of interactions between all levels of employees when changes are intro-

duced to their working lives. The additional value of using this theoretical orientation is that it deepens understanding of what goes on within change contexts in the eyes of the speech actors involved. Such a proposition is not distinguished in Hammer and Champy's (1995) 'reengineering', nor is it in Handy's (1993) proposition. The relation between both humans and organisational structures alike gives actor network theory its contextual relevance and this goes against the managerial view in which employees are regarded as actors existing in themselves as givens who need to be 'colonised' and told what should be done when organisations change. As such, actor network allows me the opportunity to account for (through employees' statements and reports) the dynamic networks they were involved in during times of changes. The ways in which these changes impact on employee experiences and the networks employees engaged in have been shown in my data analysis and reflections (see sections E and F).

### Mead's (1964) Symbolic Interactionism Approach

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Symbolic interactionism refers to a perspective in sociology (Mead, 1964; Blumer, 1969) that inspires researchers to focus on how individuals experience their environment,

rather than on the general conditions that shape the latter. It suggests exploring people's subjective sense-making of the situation, and the way this meaning is negotiated through interaction – and to link this subjective definition to a less individual-orientated characterisation of the interaction-at a more collective level. This implies identifying the language coming out of the different statements and reports that are used while interacting, the type of discourse that develops when employees are being demanded to adopt new working practices such as working in teams as well as the qualities of the organisation that results from this sense-making process.

Attempts to do so led to this paper's focus. The objective is to delineate what is to be focused on, as well as clarify what may help deepen understanding of some of the managerial thinking I discussed earlier. It has to be shown, therefore, that these individual and collective employee experiences become fully part of the focus and hence satisfy (suitably modified) criteria of good research. This will make it possible to include the general focus and the individual sets of experiences as part of a process to manage personal 'presence' as a resource to enrich or resist changes that lead in the direction of total institutions and 'colonising' managers. The symbolic interactionist approach is intended to account the ever-changing nature of

existing organisational structures and circumstances.

## ■ Framework for analysis of responses

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What the paper's plan is to concentrate on is the acquisition of an embodiment of certain types of employee experiences – experiences of the actors engaged in some (sufficiently encompassing) change. A first element has been the identification of literature (managerial as well as non-managerial) that allows me to explore how people experience change situations. A second element of the plan is the selection of a number of organisations that recently have been going through a considerable level of culturally 'redesigning' their work patterns. Four such organisations have been identified and proved willing to be involved in the study. In each organisation, a number of individuals had to be approached. To recognise possible differences between the different levels of management, two groups of interviewees were chosen from the managerial ranks (higher and middle). A third group was chosen from non-managerial, lower ranks.

The responses from 51 interviewees were transcribed and coded to maintain respondents' confidentiality and welfare. The third element of the plan was that the coded responses were

analysed using the concepts of Actor Network Theory, symbolic interactionism and presence. The results were presented to a selection of the interviewees, partly individually, partly by bringing them together in collectives – or in what I called forums. In these forums, the results of the analysis were discussed and commented upon. This procedure helped to add richness to the original sets of responses by providing reflections on the emerging languages and themes from interviewee statements – and helped identify experiences from their "life world" (Schutz, 1967). The final part of the plan concentrates on the results and the paper's contribution to the topic on organisational redesign.

## Responses as linked to the paper's plan's objectives

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It is anticipated that the analysis of and commentary on the responses will realise the paper's plan's objectives. These are :

- a. A demonstration of the dynamic nature of the relation between different roles in organisations that experience stressful changes.
- b. A description of the way managers attempt to manage employees' presence in their organisation, to approach something like a total institution.
- c. A description of the way employ-

ees' change in presence – due to attempts to reduce their presence (and create alternative roles) or increase it (and resist changes).

## ■ Data Analysis from Employee Statements in 4 Organisations

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The four organisations contacted to participate in the study were Longhurst Housing Association (LHA), Laurens Patisserie, Prospects and Eden Supported Housing Ltd all in Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, the UK. The names of the companies have not been produced in the data analysis for confidentiality purposes. They have been codified as Organisations A, B, C and D, not necessarily in chronological order. The 51 interviews took place between January 2004 and July 2005 and lasted one and a half years. The interviews were conducted on the basis of 18 questions.

The questions were designed to provide data that might 'demonstrate the dynamic nature of the relation between different roles in organisations that experience stressful changes' such as having to work on different sites of the same organisation, having to merge with other departments within the same organisational premise, but at times different ones and so on.

The categories of interview questions concentrated on management traits, and highlighted vision/mission/purpose and meaning, cultural and moral beliefs and values which also featured dimensions of empowerment and the extent of employee participation in terms of what they could and could not contribute within the change processes. The questions were as open as possible.

To facilitate the analysis, the responses of the interviewees were transcribed and coded such that comparisons of individual and collective responses might be facilitated. In the analysis I re-constructed the experiences of managers by way of the notion of a forum, or world, in which managers attempt to 'colonise' employees. Next, I re-constructed a forum from which employees react to managers. The constructions are based on the responses of the interviewees. They are meant to help recognise to what extent the experiences of the interviewees might demonstrate 'colonising' or resistant behaviours to new forms of working. The interviewees were asked to validate the re-constructions, and modify them where necessary. The results were used in the analysis. The first step of the analysis consisted of an attempt to identify whether managers and employees could remember 'normal' procedures, before team and team-working, as well as other forms of new work designs were introduced.

## Results on a local level

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The results consisted of statements describing the behaviour of managers, and of the impact this had had on the level of presence maintained by employees when their organisations were changing. It also consisted of descriptions of the strategies employees had used – either to increase their presence, or to reduce it within the 4 organisations. If the latter I tried to identify in what direction employees had decided to increase their actor-types and what they had achieved in terms of maintaining or establishing their identity, their self-esteem and dignity. It was also attempted to compare the various strategies employees in their organisations used to other experiences of other employees in other organisational settings that also introduced new working practices such as team-working and mobile working, and thereby to determine whether it was possible to fully recognise new, expandable experiences of colonisation and totalising institutions reflected in employee presence.

Responses could be summarised as stressing group values such as openness, collegiality, communication and teamwork such as these Lower Managers' statements :

*'I think we have a very tolerant culture...All the problems get sorted out at our team meetings...We are*

*supportive of each other'*  
(Organisation C).

*'The Manager sees himself definitely as a team-player. He keeps staff constantly involved'* (Organisation B).

In both of the above organisations, the impact of manager's changing working practices in terms of asking employees to work longer hours and attend to an increasing number of elderly residents needing care, has been positively welcomed by employees. The latter are conversant with the changes within a culture whereby many employees tend to work in a team environment.

On the other hand, managers were already seen to impose strict management disciplinary and sometimes punishment procedures in their efforts to ensure that employees contribute to the achievement of the desired change, as the following statements from managers and non-managers show :

*'It [power] is not abused but at times, hard decisions have to be made when employees are in gross negligence of their roles and responsibilities'* (Organisation B).

The above reference to 'hard decisions' implies that managers were increasingly being viewed by employees as losing touch of what employees would regard as the 'softer' dimen-



sions in implementing change. These include empathy, care and respect for the other person's (in this case, the employees') esteem and dignity.

There is some insensitivity to staff welfare such as shown in :

*'He [the proprietor] obviously sees himself as the boss especially when it involves disciplinary issues. I think as long as he makes the money he does not seem to care about the welfare of staff, let alone their viewpoints' (Organisation A).*

In the above organisation, the contributions of employees (their presence) were being regarded by representatives of top management on a predominantly financial level. The feelings, aspirations and expectations of staff were relegated to the back door thus creating the environment for resistance.

In the next step, it was noted that when managers tried to prepare for change by referring to group values, strong tensions and conflicts arose from employees as demonstrated in statements such as :

*'Within this constant growth the culture has shifted with the hiring of a General Manager in the middle of growth. Infrastructure has grown where staff may like to regard the culture as "them and us" especially with shift [pattern] two years ago' (Organisation A).*

*'I don't listen to other people because it has nothing to do with me' (Organisation A).*

This cultural divide between those in management and non-management positions exacerbated by a changing 'shift' pattern clashed with employee traditions. Previously, all employees worked a single 'shift', that is, from 2.00pm to 10.00pm. The additional 'shift' from 10.00pm to 6.00am signifies that some employees' work-life balance has been disrupted. The increasing mechanical breakdowns also meant that the workload of some technical staff had drastically soared. This affected their personal lives since they had to spend longer hours at work. The breakdown of communication between different employee statuses worsened the impact of the change on both managers and non-managers, at varying degrees. This was experienced as a counter-productive event, and as one of first steps for managers to totalise the organisation. Searching for more details, it was noted that regularly effort was spent to resist the change by not fully following procedures, for example via amendments to the way work would be given out to teams :

*'This [the way work is given out] is more of an informal kind of arrangement as opposed to laid-down policies and procedures' (Organisation A).*

*'A lot of the day to day job is done by support workers who know tenants best. With regards to policies and procedures this is done by myself'*

*'We are also expecting to be more flexible to the needs of staff and [those of] the business community' (Organisation B).*

In both of the above organisations, it could be noted that there were conflicting demands on how the changing policies were implemented amidst the personal requirements of employees. The latter included having to cater for one's family and loved ones (for those who have them). These growing demands were happening within an ever increasing employee workload and management's desires to meet customer needs such as having to meet a high demand for quality food products and a varying range of disability and other tenants' health requirements.

Employees reported late for or were absent from work. Managers became aware that the environment in which they were working proved to have other properties (at a higher personal level : employee presence) than anticipated before the change interventions. Individual departments and their members started to develop alternative communication channels which in some cases resulted in the use of language that resulted in organisational

"culture jamming". For example, mainly Lower Managers and Non-Managers said :

*'They just don't want to work here. So, most employees come from outside of Newark. What does that tell you, eh ?' (Organisation A).*

*'They [some managers] get easily annoyed and start shouting on staff if things go wrong' (Organisation A).*

Adherence to the managerial type of organisational culture was reinforced through constant control and supervision sessions – thus starting to transform them into total institutions, thus blurring the distinctions between the personal and organisational :

*'...different production lines...are managed by supervisors who report to assistant managers who then report to managers. There are separate departments on the shop floor and these include : Production, Cleaning, Outer packing and Dispatch departments' (Organisation A).*

The control mechanisms that were introduced increased employee stress levels. They isolated employees from managers and the organisation's core values of team-work, a common sense of direction, increasing profit margins and increased their anxieties :

*'...we feel isolated. The central management circle feels too distant from us' (Organisation D).*

*'...such managers take very stern views on absence, maternity leave and the knock-on effects that these could have on targets, performance and profit-levels. Many of these managers are on tight budgets' (Organisation A).*

In Organisation D, the geographic boundaries between the different sites and the fact that some employees were being asked to work on different sites were not proving helpful for team-working processes. Employees in this organisation felt left out of and imposed upon by the decision-makers that had offices in the organisation's headquarters in London. In both of the above organisations, this inadvertently produced (sub-) cultural groups which developed their own value systems, language and communication processes :

*'There is a mixture of praise and blame culture in Organisation A. There is also a "them and us" culture especially reflected in the friendships between those in management. Ordinary employees do not enjoy some of these privileges'*

*'I think there is always a "them-and-us" (culture) in business. The gap has grown between management*

*and staff. With the gap there is professional boundary*

In order to meet customers' demands for quality and timely products, employees were asked by managers to work longer hours, which destabilised their work/life balance and reduced their quality of life. The resulting outbursts of emotions (manifested in the use of expletives) demonstrated that staff started to become de-motivated. New forms of language and of new expressions emerged during the change. This created a sense of personal and (sub-)group identity and a desire to safeguard self-esteem and dignity :

*'People would say, we used to do this and that but we can't do them anymore' (Organisation A).*

*'Regional managers have a lot of power. Tenants also do have power in the sense that if they don't like something you have to respect that ... Some staff find it difficult to work with tenants and their views are respected'*

*'...the gap has widened between shareholders and employees' (Organisation B).*

In Organisation A, some of the things people said they used to do involved having informal conversations between different employee levels during work-

ing hours, socialising after work, calling each other by their first names and so on. Reactions to the mechanised forms of communication and interactions in both organisations included a reduction of presence as previously defined (people started to become ill or take days off), as well as an increase of such presence (staff started to spend time creating alternative communication channels and pockets of resistance, based on sub-cultural values). In Organisation A, the tendency to limit presence to small groups was strengthened by the immigration of relatively large groups of predominantly Eastern Europeans. They introduced different work ethics, a heightened perception of (sub)-cultural and group identity and stimulated awareness of changing values, for example :

*'Diversity has caused problems; some felt threatened from being in the majority in the past to being in the minority at the moment in the presence of a lot of foreign staff...English...has been a problem for the foreign staff especially in terms of training in health and safety issues' (Organisation A).*

The 'cultural divide' between managerial and non-managerial positions also started to grow, as happened between the small emerging groups and other pockets of identity formations and consolidations. Managers were being drawn into a strengthened blame culture :

*'There appears to be a "new" blame culture. Top level management make decisions but other staff are partially involved in the process' (Organisation A).*

*'You will always get an element of "them and us". Support staff would feel that way. Managers are becoming more involved' (Organisation B).*

The increasing mechanisation and control of communication channels by managers resulted in employees withdrawing their participation in organisational procedures. Employees started to change their expectations and reduce their interest in the overall development of their organisation and, hence, in proper and sufficient communication inside groups with different tasks and between them :

*'Getting orders out is their priority... the primary interest is financial gain for the company and for themselves' (Organisation A).*

*'Frankly, management keep their plans for the company up their sleeves. They hardly consult us on what is going to happen in the future. You might hear the odd word or two in the grapevine and that's it' (Organisation D).*

Rumour-mongering increased notably among employees in Organisation D

as a way of coping with their estrangement from change initiatives as well as the mobility that their work sometime entailed, as handed down from Headquarters. Various sub-cultural identities developed in a process of isolation, department and job site/branch alienation and breakdown of communication.

## Culture Fragmentation

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A clear indication of the emerging process of fragmentation was that many employees no longer appeared to know their mission statement :

*'I don't think I can fully remember what our mission statement is because many people do not seem to care anyway' (Organisation A).*

*'Part of our mission statement entails providing best quality homes' (Organisation C).*

The above respondents have clearly demonstrated their lack of awareness of what managers may consider to be the guiding principles or values enshrined in mission statements. This uncaring attitude reflected the growing rift between what managers were seeking to achieve by way of cultural change and how employees detached themselves from those values that were driving the changes. Staff reduced their presence, even in the care indus-

try, by increasingly becoming more interested in their pay packages and other personally remunerating mechanisms :

*'Nottingham staff are generally not happy with wrong wages being paid, about rotas, hours and so on' (Organisation B).*

The increasing imposition of new working practices such as employees having to work for longer hours and on what would appear to be unfavourable times further exacerbated the already existing tensions between management and employees. Little or no effort appeared to be spent to develop caring values. A culture of resentment, disengagement and outright resistance was allowed to grow, in defiance of the 'official', apparently integrative and "shared" organisational culture of team-working, collegiality, care for staff, mobile working and the desire to meet the quality standards through employee commitment :

*'...management are definitely not bothered about the community... There are massive, big turnover figures within employees who come from Newark' (Organisation A).*

*'Management don't care about anyone. We are a number to be used as they wish for their selfishness' (Organisation A).*

*'...a lot of staff are presently unhappy (Organisation D).*

The growing resentment from employees and the communities in which these organisations were located could be attributed to management's desire to achieve production targets, meet delivery of service and product deadlines and so on. These were being done to the detriment of the humane treatment of staff such that the latter had the feeling of being 'used'.

Managers also changed their values, and reduced their presence – although in a different form and apparently with less regret than non-managerial staff. They started to think in terms of power and control and of manifesting their authority such that they increasingly started to 'colonise' employees :

*'...the General Manager... has the power to decide, in effect, how these jobs are carried out. There are Supervisors in each team, and they report to the Financial Manager' (Organisation B).*

*'Managers and shareholders have the power here because they own the land on which the factory was constructed. They do what they feel is right for their interests' (Organisation A).*

*'Really the power lies with the Director and the Financial and*

*Regional Managers and the social services who dictate hours, pay, training in order for us to remain in business. They control everything' (Organisation B).*

Managers appeared to usher in something similar to a totalising institution by increasingly using their power to impose new working practices onto employees. New disciplinary and intermittent punishment procedures in management's efforts to force through culture change served to distance managers from other employees. Employees talked about :

*'...disciplinary procedures...' (Organisation A).*

*'....audits and safeguards in place and if these are violated then disciplinary procedures have to be implemented' (Organisation B).*

*'You do as you are told. You are never talked to. The proprietor never says "hello" (Organisation A).*

The disciplinary practices being referred to in Organisations A and B were similar in nature. These involved corrective measures such as suspensions without pay, deduction of employee wages, formal written warnings on absence, not meeting production and service delivery targets and deadlines and other performance-related issues. These changes took place

despite the fact that the new organisation was expected to continue to be based on previously encouraged 'normal' behaviours such as cooperation, teamwork and encouraging an atmosphere of friendliness :

*'I think we have a very tolerant culture. We are very equal opportunities driven '* (Organisation B)..

*'Management and shareholders get on well as long as the job's done. There is no problem'* (Organisation C).

The latter is similar to a situation where every employee contributes to successful change interventions, within an atmosphere of collegiality and humaneness. In the absence of this, the managerial world seems to become mechanised and robot-like, and to increasingly lack communication structures beyond command and control frameworks :

*'...there's a structure, a strict chain of command which all employees are expected to follow'* (Organisation B).

*'In a way, we are all employed by the Chief Executive so he has a lot of power and control over all staff'* (Organisation B).

Within the process of mechanising channels of conversation such as appraisals, staff forums, staff develop-

ment interviews and so on, managers lost presence and respect from staff – and no longer appeared able to behave according to long term strategies :

*'...to cut down on operational expenses'* (Organisation B).

*'The immediate plans for the future are to be more customer-focused and to have "Just rewards" for people who pay rent on time...'* (Organisation C).

The above cited cases demonstrated managers' desires to cling to short-term measures such as meeting production targets, satisfying customer demands and placating shareholders' profit lines at the expense of adopting a more visionary approach to change implementation. Among the latter would be treating employees with more respect and dignity such that sustainability of profit, production and performance margins may thrive in the longer term. Unfairness and lack of transparency and accountability crept in :

*'Even if you are genuinely sick, they keep ringing to make sure you come back as soon as possible. Some of them have been off sick for as long as five months in a row. Is this fair ?'* (Organisation A).

*'People's training needs are assessed during [Staff Development*

Interviews] SDIs. However, occasionally you do hear of stories of someone or two may feel unfairly treated (Organisation C).

Employees started feeling victimised by the very people they were expected to work with to achieve changes. A sense of disappointment and de-motivation crept in.

### Internal Communication Fragmentation

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There was a proposal to create an employment tribunal. Employees talked about being :

*'...assessed along certain criteria such as basic competences (e.g. communication, teamwork etc) and these determine promotion' and 'referrals...'* (Organisation C).

Managers used the above methods to (re)-establish their control and authority on staff who were increasingly becoming disenchanted with increasing demands on their time.

This may be seen as an attempt to re-establish secondary communication processes with distinctive sets of language and value orientations. Other attempts included the introduction of new computer-based technology, clocking, signing-in and out of work

and other routine-like reporting mechanisms :

*'I report to my Line Manager and the Director who are both in the same office with me. These two individuals delegate jobs as they deem fit'* (Organisation B).

*'We work as a team on different production lines which are managed by supervisors who report to assistant managers who then report to managers'* (Organisation A).

*'In the property department, we talk about the jobs we have in tray with meetings with the General Manager who has the power to decide, in effect, how these jobs are carried out'* (Organisation B).

Employees tended to underestimate the speed the latter (reporting mechanisms) need to be re-established. It appears that their introduction has to be minimally part of the change process itself. Differences in interpreting what accounts for changing working practices and what does not will not disappear when one language is made to dominate, e.g. to lead to measures to 'push' staff to become less lazy and more domineering of other people's presence. Differences in the linguistic systems being used by participating parties may create a sphere of mystery and alienation between managers and employees. Unfortunately,



the resulting form of command communication tends to be inefficient in high-grade change and team-work tasks – precisely the type of situation that introducing new working patterns is intended to improve.

## ■ Reflections on a non-local level

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The remaining part of this analysis contains broad conclusions concerning the dynamic ways managers and other employees interact (regarding their presence) in times of stressful introduction of new working practices. A number of aspects appear worth commenting upon : power, change and resistance to change, control, cooperation and friendliness– as aspects of how employees (managers and others) maintain, increase or reduce their presence in the organisation.

### Power and Knowledge

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All organisations appear as a well-differentiated mixture of elements : people, their experiences, their skills, their knowledge, the way they interact and communicate, the constraints that are imposed on their skills and on their communication (for example new job definitions and person specification requirements), the way an organisation's history is recorded and its future

and the changes required for this determined. Most or all of these elements are involved in the definition and notion of organisational performance and organisational development. Knowledge in the traditional sense of being able to predict (Chase & Simon, 1973; Simon, 1981), for example, allows one to always outwit others when doing things (for example, playing chess). It will pay, therefore, to acquire such knowledge – e.g. to buy it, to steal it – and use it to do things better and hence to gain, or to prevent others from using that knowledge. One of the Higher Managers said :

*'We are quite "big" and active on training. Quite a pool of resources is used to buy training packages' (Organisation B).*

It was the manager's expectation that the 'buying' of talent equates to an expected improvement in organisational and individual performance. Performance also depends on the type of employee selected and the appropriateness of the selection methods : people may be innovative, or conservative. Forms of interaction also will contribute to the performance of change interventions, as do constraints on communication and mission statements, the ways jobs are specified and recruitment conducted. They make it possible for employees to cooperate (or resist) and to amass experience even when not their own.

All such elements clearly constitute relatively long-term resources to performance, and in this sense may be called knowledge – even when they do not satisfy its traditional definition (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). If a manager ‘colonises’ an employee, for example, that employee may develop behaviour based on his or her knowledge of what the manager intends to do; or he or she may resist by taking knowledge away, or by mismanaging communication channels such that “culture jamming” takes place through other linguistic forms and tacit as well as explicit behaviours. Alternatively, ‘colonisation’ may reduce a manager’s presence and hence take his knowledge away to other organisations and parallel forms of interactions. Each time such a change takes place, knowledge will be involved and hence the power of using it in different formats and forums to the advantage of the respective party or parties.

What the responses of the interviewees suggest is that theories of organisation tend to negate the possibility of ‘knowing’ about creating presence in situations of stress – and hence the possibility of any organisation to acquire knowledge about its own proper functioning. Any such theory should incorporate ways to do so and thereby prevent unsystematic efforts of knowledge acquisition – as exemplified by the mechanisation of managers’ behaviour as well as by the increase or decrease

of presence of other employees when new forms of working are implemented. Systematic forms of knowledge acquisition might prevent such efforts, and allow humane forms of organisational change, that is change without the need for colonising and totalising tendencies. Foucault (1982) argued the reverse : he identified the development of organisations towards total institutions as a loss of inquiry. Knowledge acquisition thus appears to constitute the ‘dark matter’ of organisational theory (Argyris & Schon, 1996). It may be considered unfortunate that knowledge acquisition often is replaced by a close relative, which is education (staff appraisals, staff development initiatives, workshops, briefings, service delivery as seen in some of the organisational cases examined in this study).

It is at this point that the frameworks of symbolic interactionism and Actor Network Theory appear to be most relevant. Both emphasise the need to consider personal developments and interactions within these in terms of the place of the persons involved in larger, collective structures, and hence to link inside to outside, parallel employee experiences. This position is exemplified as well as reinforced in the sense that organisational theories should help ensure that employee contributions (their presence) become as powerful and as enriching and liberating to all participants as possible.

## Change and Resistance to Change

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It may be argued, of course, that organisations sometimes have to face fundamental changes to work designs to survive market forces. Examples abound – such as a business like Kodak that has to change as a different camera was developed or one of the organisations of this study that intended to integrate a relatively large migration of East European workers. Would not imposing on employees or not forcing them to change habits not imply that the companies involved are doomed ? If individuals cannot change, their organisations cannot adapt to external client demands or internal pressures for them to do so. This conclusion is not contested, of course.

The aim of this paper has been to demonstrate that adapting in a certain way (by forcing changes and colonising employee presences) will have dire consequences – in particular a loss of coherence due to tensions between institutionalising (and sometimes, totalising) and individualising forces. In so far as this aim was achieved, an alternative showed itself. Organisational theory should include processes of knowledge acquisition as part of any organisation.

This interpretation is not new. Other authors have identified meta-scripts,

involving for example the heroes and heroines of organisational change (Schein, 1985), that excluded, isolated or marginalised people's experiences during change (Boje, 2001, 2002) and thereby made managers and other employees either lose presence or manipulate presence through other, perhaps less desirable, means and behavioural manifestations. What is new is the emphasis on the way people may negotiate presence to ensure proper adaptation to new organisational challenges in their efforts to modernise and survive.

## Control

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The notion of control is frequently used in the study of organisational behaviour. It suggests that certain processes can be set aside and can be made to revert to desired results any time they deviate from pre-defined characteristics. The models that have been developed to facilitate control tend to allow for a parametrisation of their functions. In other words, good control models allow managers to manipulate a small number of 'buttons'. Once the right values have been set, the process to be controlled continues on its own. It obviously is not impossible that dominating behaviour of managers in stress situations implies a harking back to this type of control model. Using this model implies that events such as stress, emotional anxi-

eties and changes in interactions do not become visible : they are supposed to be part of the control process and hence to be taken care of without any managerial intervention :

*'...there's a structure, a strict chain of command...'* (Organisation B).

*'There have been a couple of changes and the major ones include : a) office site; b) management structure and chain of command'* (Organisation C).

In the above instances, managers' attempted to control employee presence through manipulating the structural layouts via which communication was carried out. Strictness in terms of who is allowed to say what was considered necessary in managers' attempts to continue to exert sufficient control over employees' working lives.

Various authors have spent some effort to maintain the model, but to make it more sensitive to such local events. The work of Beer (1981) is exemplary. He identifies 5 levels in the control model, each with a different time scale. The shortest time scale is on the level of employees working together; the longest time scale links to a company's strategic behaviour. This work is attractive as it allows for complex types of organisational behaviour. It does not recognise the role of first and second order personal knowledge, i.e. that

which employees may purposefully contribute to the performance of their organisation, and may include respect, self esteem and personal dignity :

*'We are just like cattle and you do as you are told...'*(Organisation A).

*'I wish there could be more respect between management, staff and local community but this presently needs a lot of working on'* (Organisation C).

Comparison with the notion of control and with Beer's modifications regarding the short-term, operational as well as the longer-term strategic connotations of introducing new working practices, thus support the results of this study and its additions to the literature. If one values performance, it appears advisable to focus more on presence than on short or long-term control mechanisms.

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## Friendliness

Although knowledge acquisition refers to a process that is essentially open (one cannot be sure that testing has been sufficient, that no adaptation of knowledge may be necessary), it does appear possible to achieve plateaus – periods where the need for an organisation to adopt further adaptation to changing market forces appears at

least temporarily diminished. In such periods employee presence will appear easily negotiable, and its establishment may be considered 'friendly' and desirable by managers and shareholders. It happens when all parties, employees included, proceed (in an enriching and non-colonising manner) within the constraints of overall adaptation to new working practices.

## ■ Conclusions on the paper's plan and results

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The results of the analysis may be summarised as follows. Without an understanding of the notion of presence, managers tend to show behaviour with unreasonable levels of destructive effect, i.e. behaviour to the detriment of the organisation as well as to its employees. By initially recognising and trying to manage presence – increasing it, decreasing it in terms of overall performance of some organisational tasks – such behaviour may be avoided and may make companies better places for employees to work in and develop.

Typically, such companies strive continuously to re-design their organisations to deal with internal and external challenges and increase their competence, i.e. their ability to work systematically, cooperatively (Hammer &

Champy, 1995) and in a liberating way (Flood, 1990).

Changes of this nature depend on suitable forms of communication in the interactions between higher and middle management and employees in the organisations studied. It was noted that many attempts tend to be made to improve communication to enhance the new working practices, but that these remain ineffective if they are not geared to increase and balance employee presence. Making employees feel valued and dignified human beings need not imply that companies cannot change or downsize or cut costs. It means that they can do so without first increasing or maintaining the damage that they try to alleviate.

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